My name is Danielle Anguiano and I am a tutor of the Writing Center which is just outside these doors within the Student Learning Center. Have any of you been to the Writing Center before? A couple people.
OK. OK, so before we get started, we do have a lot to go over but I just want to tell you a little bit about the Student Learning Center--come on in--and the Writing Center. So, writing tutors are available Monday through Friday, that is, Monday through Thursday 9 to 6 and Fridays 9 to 3. We help with all aspects of the writing process and with a wide range of assignments, so we help with everything from personal statements to master's thesis, a whole bunch of stuff, so I encourage all of you to try to [inaudible] into that and we will also be available to help you with the GRE if that's something you're interested in. We also have appointments available and you can schedule ongoing appointments if you'd like to meet with a tutor to have them help you with the writing section. That's what I did when I took the GRE, it's really, really helpful. To tell you a little bit about our services, we have drop-ins available so that's when you just stop by. You are guaranteed half an hour, and then appointments are where you're guaranteed a full hour. And any questions so far?
OK, so before we get started, I have a couple of questions for you. How many of you have taken the GRE? How many of you are planning on taking the GRE? OK. How many of you are here for other reasons? OK. Well, this will be really useful to you, hopefully, even if it's not in the near future. So for those of you who do know what the GRE is, what do you know about the writing section?

[ Inaudible Remark ]

Yeah, what do you know about the writing section? Yeah?

Audience member: I know you have to give specific scenarios and situations.

All right, good, yeah. So we will move forward with that. I just kind of want to get an idea for everyone in the room with that.
So, I will give you a brief overview that we're going to cover. We're going to be covering a ton of stuff today, I really want to make this situation--this workshop useful for you, and for those of you who looked into GRE workshops, you'll find that they're very expensive and so this is--we have one free hour together and I'd like to make the most of that so we're going to cover quite a bit of things. I'm going to talk about what the writing measure is, how its scored, the difference between the two essays, analyzing argument, analyzing issue and how you can best prepare and we'll do a couple of activities that should help you prepare for the GRE.
OK, so before we get started, I figured we do a little background on what the writing measure is. What the writing measure is it's two essays, analyzing argument, analyzing issue. You will have 30 minutes to do each essay and basically that's designed to kind of test your critical thinking, as well as your ability to articulate an argument or analyze the prompt they give you. And a couple fun facts, there is no spell check on the GRE, so try to keep that in mind as you prepare yourself and study for that. One other important thing is that generally what I found on the GRE is it's best to kind of stick to a five paragraph essay format. Do all of you know what that is? OK.
Well, I wasn't sure if everyone would so I include this really cute little graphic. So, if anyone doesn't know what it is and doesn't want to say, that's OK, I'm going to tell you anyway. Basically, that would be your introduction, conclusion, and your three body paragraphs and it will cover one--every three main points from your thesis. I thought it was really cute. Yeah, right. See? I'm glad you all appreciate it.
So, I also figured that you all would be interested in how the GRE is scored and I’m sure everyone wants to do their best on that. It’s scored from zero to six. They also do give no scores if you don’t complete the essay, or I mean, if you don’t even write anything for the essay. So it’s scored from zero to six. The emphasis is on a complete essay so finishing it as well as following a five-paragraph format, and that just goes back to organization, and then one smaller part of that is vocabulary. From other students I’ve worked with on the GRE, I noticed they’re really concerned about vocabulary. They think that using serious sounding words is the way to get—bring up your GRE score, but really that’s a very, very small part of it, and it comes down to really understanding the prompt and writing a complete and organized essay. So you don’t have to read all of this and this is kind of a lot of information. I just want to highlight a couple important things. The first paragraph kind of sums up how the GRE is scored, so it assesses analytical writing, your critical thinking skills, the ability to reason, assemble evidence to develop a position and communicate complex ideas as well as your control of grammar and mechanics. So like I mentioned, it’s scored from zero to six, six being the highest score you can get so I kind of focused on that first because I figure that’s everyone is interested in. So I had to do a couple of things. It's about analysis, supporting your main points with compelling reasons and examples, well-focused and well-organized essay, sentence variety and precise vocabulary, as well as some minor errors but they don’t interfere with meaning. So when it comes to taking a GRE, the important thing to remember is that your essay doesn't have to be perfect.
Obviously, you want to do the best you can but we're human, they know a computer didn't write it so it's understandable if there are some errors. And it is a very brief amount of time to write, you know, a five-paragraph essay and they take that into account when they score it. Again, I have a couple things from scores 5 to 4.5 or 4.5 to 5, develops and supports main ideas, generally focused and well-organized, good control of sentence structure and language usage but may have minor errors that do not interfere with meaning.
And then I included the rest of it. So basically what you'll see is the higher scores are kind of tricking out, OK, are they analyzing ideas, are they developing and supporting their main point, that sort of thing, and once you get into lower scores, you know, zero to two point--zero to two, it's looking at, OK, so they have some serious lacking areas in the writing. But we won't focus too much on that.
OK, so how many of you knew that there were two essays on the writing portion? OK, couple people, yeah. So that often can come as a surprise to people so when you do study for the GRE, you're going to want to study for both different kinds of essays. So, to give you a little information about what those are, there's analyzing issue and analyzing argument. Issue will usually be like a basic statement and it's something you're supposed to respond to. It's--so like it says, analyze or respond to the general statement and generally you're going to take a position on a topic. Whereas analyzing argument which is what we'll be covering today isn't about taking a position, it's about looking at the logic that's used within the prompt and sort of identifying places where you need--would need more information to take a position. So that doesn't quite make sense yet, hopefully it will as we go on. And just a brief note, if all of you could put your phones away, it's really distracting for me if you're on your phones. So if you could do that, I'd really appreciate it.
OK, so a couple pieces of information about analyzing argument. What you're going to be looking at when you see this prompt is you're going to be looking for, what are they offering evidence, support or proof? What are they saying, or what are they not saying, or what are they assuming without really having the proper evidence to back that up, that sort of thing. Again, you're not being asked to take a position, you're not being asked to say whether the statements are accurate or not. And I've noticed as well is that some students think that they're supposed to know what sort of information is going to be given to them in the prompt, right? So these prompts are a wide range of topics, you're not expected to know about that topic, you're expected to write an essay in response to the information they give you. So it's not about coming in with information about the prompt beforehand. Again, not being asked to express your own views on the analyzing argument essay. OK.
So, I pointed out a couple of things just I noticed from when I took the GRE of ways that you can best prepare. One thing that I found really helpful was learning the language. So as we get into our activities, you'll kind of notice that the language they use on the GRE is weird. It takes awhile for you to get adjusted to because they say things and it could take awhile to understand what they're actually saying. So what you're going to want to do is read as many different prompts as you can to get yourself familiar with that language and the benefit there is once you do that, when you actually sit down and take the GRE and do your writing essay, you'll be much quicker at understanding what they're asking of you.

The other thing, exposing yourself to prompts, look at any prompts you can find. If you just Google GRE, analyzing argument prompts, you'll come up with a whole list of things on the GRE website. And like I'm pretty sure both the prompts that I actually saw on the GRE were the sample problems they had on that site. So I'd encourage you to do that. The other aspect is utilizing timed exercise. So how many of you are comfortable writing a five-paragraph essay in 30 minutes? OK, a couple people, that's awesome. For a lot of people that can be a little nerve-wracking so one way to combat that and even if you are comfortable, I'd still encourage you take advantage of this is to actually time yourself and look at the time that you're going to have and, you know, figure out how to make the most of that in areas where you're going to need to spend more time. So for me, coming up with an introduction in two main ideas is really easy and I was able to do that pretty quickly. But my third main idea took a little longer, as well as the conclusion. So it's a good thing to test yourself and see where you're at with that.
OK, so when it comes to actually tackling the exam, what you're going to be doing is you're going to have the prompt and then what I found as most helpful and other people I've talked to have kind of said the same thing is to read the prompt and come up with your three main ideas that will make up your body paragraphs. Then get into your body paragraphs, and then your conclusion. And regards to introduction, much of your introduction is going to come from the prompt. So they give you a large paragraph or two paragraphs about--for the prompt, and you'll use a lot of that just in your introduction. So that's probably not where you'll spend as much time writing.
OK, so I have a couple activities for all of you. Before we get into that, I kind of want to show you one of the prompts from the GRE. So, why don't you take a couple minutes to read this, let's say about two to three minutes, kind of depending where everyone's at and pay attention to the main point and then look at what they asked you and then I'll have a couple of questions for you. So just read this two or three minutes and we'll touch back. OK, is everyone done reading the prompt? Just shows a matter of fact that all of you are looking at me. OK, so, what do you think the thesis is? What do you think their main point is in this prompt?

[ Inaudible Response ]

Good. Yeah. So the first sentence is going to be the thesis, right. A jazz music club in Monroe would be a tremendously profitable enterprise. And then all the other information they offer is in support of that. So, what are some three main points you could come up with in response to this essay. If you're going to be--if you're writing your GRE essay on this, what are some of your points you might use? And I included a couple examples of what some of those might be at the bottom. So I encourage you not to actually use those but that's just some things you might want to keep in mind, information you might need to take position on this. I'll give you another minute or two to come up with that. Does anyone have a point they'd like to share? It doesn't necessarily have to be right, just something you thought of, a question you had after reading this prompt.

>> Maybe the age group that they're going to see the jazz festival [inaudible].
>> Good, yeah. No, that would be a perfect example because if it's limited to one age group then that might necessarily guarantee that it's going to be profitable, right? Anything else? There's probably not any wrong answers. Yeah?

>> Well, it said that the people, 800,000 people attended but if you could segment that, then you get a data on like where they'd come from because the closest club is 65 miles away but people going to take them a hundred miles away because of well, it's marketed, you know, kind of fun [inaudible].

>> Good, yeah.

>> [Inaudible] a little bit to see good general statement but--

>> Yeah, exactly, both of those points that you two brought up are things that you could write a paragraph about if this was the prompt you were given. Anything else? Yeah?

>> It says jazz club but maybe there are one of other jazz affiliated organizations that aren't clubs that they could be competing with, so it's 65 mile away club might not necessarily mean that's the nearest competition.
Perfect, yeah, that's excellent. Anything else? We all are coming up with some really great examples. Yeah, and so I think those are fantastic. A couple of the ones I brought up are what is the average income? So for instance they asked you here that the typical jazz— or they mentioned the typical jazz fan spends close to a thousand dollars per year on jazz entertainment, right? So they're throwing this number at you and it's--some questions that came up from you, what's the average income? Because if the average income in the city is very low, then it's unlikely to even--that any of the jazz fans there would be spending that much money on entertainment, or that sort of thing, or were the attendants of the festival from the city or nearby, like you mentioned. And then another one I came up with was, how popular is the jazz club 65 miles away. So things like that, yeah, and so you've all shared some really excellent points. I'm sure even those of you who didn't share had some excellent things. OK, so now what we're going to do is this will sort of to get you all comfortable, or not comfortable, familiar with what the prompts are going to look like. Now, I'm going to give you all individual activity for you to take a few minutes and do something similar.
So I have a prompt, listed here and all of you should have it in front of you as well. It should be the first one on the page and what I want you to do is take about--let's--I wrote down five minutes but because this is fairly new, let's take about five to seven minutes to read the prompt and come up with three main points and write it down on your whiteboard or a piece of paper if you have it and we will be sharing it afterward. So I'm going to put the time up on the board of about when we should be done and I'll kind of assess the room in five minutes and see where we're at. And we're a little bit ahead of schedule so how about--let's just go around the table and have everyone share one thing they wrote down. So we'll start over here.

>> So for the first one, you were asking like something I can write about, right? Argument? I was just thinking about like the member of skateboarders [inaudible] and the prospect how the music, like the interest [inaudible]. Two people can be a lot from--from the consumer is not a big deal.

>> OK.

>> Such as depending and also the age group, so--

>> Good, thank you.

>> What are the number of shoppers? How many like vandalisms were like out there?

>> Good. It's you now.
How many number of shoppers actually related to the scares, the number of declining shoppers actually related to the scares or there's something else going on.

Good.

[Inaudible] state of economy, that would [inaudible] to be all kinds of factors. And it's all based on opinion and not facts but we need to forget based on assumption.

Rather than an actual like statistical evidence, right? Good, yeah, that goes back to noticing what they're implying without really having the evidence back it up.

We could write about the benefits of prohibiting skateboarding in Central Plaza.

OK, next.

I asked, are there still more shoppers than skateboarders and what are the numbers and percentages, correlation. Is it correlation? And if [inaudible] it doesn't mean that students--skateboarders, the shop owner's claim lacks empirical evidence.

Awesome, thank you.
>> Maybe asking for customer feedback about like what they think about skateboarding and whether it's affecting them shopping in the Central Plaza and maybe is there a skate park nearby where they could be [inaudible] or other portions could be escorting them to do--

>> Yeah, that was kind of similar to me. I had listed as well.

>> Have the prices risen in the Plaza just for the merchandise itself and have there been budget cuts on say for the employees or the janitors in general, 'cause that [inaudible] the-- not a vandalism because there's no [inaudible].

>> Excellent, thank you.

    [ Inaudible Remark ]

Thank you.

>> That was an [inaudible] vandalism called before for that increase [inaudible].

>> The [inaudible] there's no proof that Central Plaza has been [inaudible] and it depends on the [inaudible].

>> Great.
Other than people, what constitutes the decrease of--

In the decrease in shopping there?

That's right.

Yeah. Great.

[ Inaudible Remark ]

Thanks.

[ Inaudible Remark ]

Thank you.

[ Inaudible Remarks ]

Good. We'll go through that now, too.

[ Inaudible Remarks ]

Great.
>> [Inaudible] of the skateboarder are disturbing shopping or are there other factors that can influence this?

>> Or is that is there any evidence like surveillance or anything that the vandalism could just [inaudible]?

>> I asked if there was a skateboard park nearby and if not, would [inaudible].

>> Awesome, great. Well, all of you have some really good things to say and it sounds like you're really looking at the prompt and what they're implying, what they don't have evidence for. Again, I'm not taking an opinion or [inaudible] explanation, I'm just looking what evidence you would need, and sounds like all of you are doing that so that's fantastic. That was pretty quick seeing as I'm assuming most of you have never looked at GRE prompts before. There's a couple of you I know have.
OK, then, we have one more activity and I'm going to give you less time to do this one just to sort of imitate how you should be progressing when you're timing yourself. It's OK to start with more time to [inaudible] to get familiar with it and then gradually should be using less and less time. So, all these should have this prompt. This was actually the prompt that was on the GRE when I took it. And so, I'm going to allow you all to read the prompt but just as a reminder what it says at the bottom is write a response in which you discuss what evidence is needed to evaluate the argument and explain how the evidence would weaken or strengthen the argument. Yeah, so, sticking with what we've been doing, I'll give you about three minutes to read the prompt and come up with your three main points. So we will start that now. OK, so time's up. In the interest of time, so we don't run out, we have to terminate our activities. I just need to have maybe three or four people to tell me what they wrote, so we have any volunteers to do that. Otherwise we can go around the table. Yes.

[ Inaudible Response ]

Great, yeah. What are some of your other points?

[ Inaudible Response ]

>> Good, yeah. Great, anyone else? Yeah.

[ Inaudible Response ]
Great, thank you.

>> [Inaudible] that it doesn't necessarily mean that they're using the money for the students that [inaudible] different.

>> Great. Yeah. 'Cause school is a pretty general--or education is a pretty general category, right? Good, does anyone--one or two more people want to share? OK, good, are you sure? Well, yeah?

>> I just have another point that just because it's a city of this size--size of the city are similar, it doesn't mean that their residential makeup is the same.

>> Excellent.

>> One city might be composed of an older population so the schools might have a smaller population and the other city might have a larger younger population, so the schools might have more students which would lead to more education funding.

>> Good, that's an excellent point. All of you have brought up some really good points. So--and actually some of the points you've brought up, I'm pretty sure I used as the body paragraphs for my essay when I wrote this. So that's great. It seems like all of you are making a lot of progress. Before we move forward, I just want to make one note, what was your name?
>> Justin.

>> Justin brought up really good point. What we're--the activity we're doing right now in regards to coming up with our three main points, this is more like laying the groundwork for your essay. So this isn't something you would actually--it's not something they require of you to do in your essay when you write it but it's something you will be doing regardless, right, you'll come up with your three main points and use those to write your body paragraphs. So this is all about laying the groundwork and kind of the prep work you do once you see the prompt in--or coming with ideas. Does that makes sense to everyone? OK. So then we have one last activity.
Activity: Your essay

"Two years ago, consultants predicted that West Egg's landfill, which is used for garbage disposal, would be completely filled within five years. During the past two years, however, the town's residents have been recycling twice as much material as they did in previous years. Next month, the amount of recycled material—which includes paper, plastic, and metal—should further increase, since charges for pickup of other household garbage will double. Furthermore, over 90 percent of the respondents to a recent survey said that they would do more recycling in the future. Because of our town's strong commitment to recycling, the available space in our landfill should last for considerably longer than predicted."

Write a response in which you discuss what specific evidence is needed to evaluate the argument and explain how the evidence would weaken or strengthen the argument.

In the next five minutes, you should read the prompt, create your three main points, and write your introduction.

What I'm going to have all of you do is—we're going to look at this prompt, come up with your three main points, and I'd like all of you to write an introduction to your essay and I'm going to give you, let's say, six—I said in here five but--actually now we'll go with five minutes to do that and I actually am going to remember to set my timer so you all would hear it when it goes off. OK, so we're going to do five minutes starting now. OK, so the timer just went off, a really low volume. [inaudible] when we didn't hear it so quit working in your introduction as of now, as much as it might be tempting to continue.
OK, so how was this activity? Did any of you finish your introductions? Five minutes is kind of a really short amount of time, right? How far did most of you get?

[ Inaudible Response ]

What was that?

[ Inaudible Response ]

OK, great. Yeah, and honestly, the three points that got--kind of take a little bit longer and, you know, if you spend more time in one section, that's not really [inaudible] as long as you know you accommodate once you are in the other section. [Inaudible] for me, I couldn't quite finish the intro so I would jump to the body paragraphs of what I had and then go back and I was able to finish it with extra time to read over it. So what were some of the points you came up with? I know that prompt was kind of--at least for me I thought it was a pretty challenging prompt. So what were some of the main points you all came up with? Yeah.

[ Inaudible Response ]

Great. And did you have something over here?

[ Inaudible Response ]
Great. Thank you. Are there any other points that you all would like to share? It's our last sharing activity. Yeah?

[ Inaudible Response ]

Good, thank you. Anything else? Yeah?
I think it's funny. They say that the recycling has, you know, doubled and it's going to further increase due to factors like [inaudible] syntax. But what's funny is like what was it initially? You know if every household recycled two 2-liter bottles and now they're getting four, still on the grand scheme of scale, it's still a small percentage of waste.

Very true.

And the assumption is all predicted on what? You know?

It's all dependent on that commitment to recycling, right?

Which without numbers or anything percentage is it doesn't--it's just one--

Good. Well, it sounds like you all are doing a really good job of sort of picking up on the information they're giving you without really always having evidence to back that up. So, really impressed. That was a lot to cover in about 50 minutes.
So, that is the end of our workshop. I just wanted to remind you of some of the resources you got available to you when you take the GRE or otherwise,
the Writing Center is available for any of your writing needs, no matter the stage of the writing. We also help with the GRE. I would encourage all of you to look up--to go in the ETS website for the GRE and they--and you can just Google it like ETS, analyzing argument or analyzing issue prompts. That's what I do because I know sometimes it can be tricky to navigate that website. This workshop will be available online and I want to remind you again, this is only one aspect of preparation. There are two essays within the writing portion of the GRE, so this is just one essay that we covered today. Are there any last questions or anything? OK, well, and that is all. Thank you all for participating. I hope this was of use to you. I know we covered a lot of material and I--